

Something had to be done.

Cthulhu had mankind on the ropes and it didn't look good at all. The beginning of the hellish assault had been signaled by the suicides of many artists, scientists and other intellectuals. These sensitive individuals were driven to madness and self-destruction by the telepathic dream-sendings Cthulhu was projecting forth from his cyclopean lair in the depths of the Pacific.

As the assault progressed, more and more individuals fell victim to hysteria, derangement and self-destruction. No longer were sensitive intellectuals the only victims; everyone now was susceptible to this psychic attack from savages to factory workers to grave-diggers all were swept up and engulfed by this scourge. The cause was clear enough to anyone who had been touched by these dream-sendings. The monstrosity beneath the sea became everyone's obsession and source of terror; Cthulhu seemed to revel in making his existence known.

The tentacled and gargantuan mass of protean tissue that was the obscene reality of Cthulhu was no longer just a literary figment it was hellishly real and malignantly alive. As to why the assault started when it did must remain conjecture; was Cthulhu fully awakened by a seismic disturbance in the deep ocean, were the constellations right for this to begin, did some sort of internal clock awaken him, was Cthulhu's hunger for human flesh driving him to

increased aggressivity who now can say?

Mankind was desperate and flailing about for a solution; governmental leaders turned to the military for an answer. Cthulhu was known to dwell in his fortress-city of R'lyeh, deep down in the Pacific. Further, his psychic dream-sendings carried with them strong indications of where R'lyeh was located. Cthulhu almost seemed to be saying come and get me to the humanity that he was now so persistently victimizing.

The military certainly tried to get Cthulhu. They sent forth a fleet of fast-attack submarines; Cthulhu let them get just so close, then seized the crews' minds and sent them screaming with madness to their deaths, crushed by the pressure of the deep ocean. The military sent forth bombers armed with undersea nuclear weapons; Cthulhu once again wielded his telepathic swordsendings the bombers, piloted now by crews transformed into demented marionettes, to drop their bombs on densely populated cities, wreaking death and destruction.

Cthulhu rose to full fury now apparently incensed at mankind's impudence in trying to attack him. He squatted like a bloated spider within R'lyeh and used his telepathic weaponry with a vengeance; he cut, thrust, slashed and stabbed all with sadistic malevolence but uncanny precision. He seized the minds of a group of nuns who were vacationing at Niagara Falls to get their minds off the world crisis, and sent them jumping to their deaths in the raging

waters below. A newly-wed couple was visiting Paris with expectations of romance and tender loveCthulhu sent them to a wretched death, throwing themselves beneath the wheels of an arriving train in the Paris underground. This and much more similar did Cthulhu inflict upon mankind, and humankind began to see the handwriting on the walla wretched death for all and Cthulhu triumphant.

While all this was happening, a shadowy sub-population of the world sat up and took notice. "What will become of us if mankind dies out? Will our blood-stock be eliminated? What should we do?", the Nosferatu asked.

Already dead and quite inhuman in nature, these vampires were not afflicted with any of the sufferings that mankind experienced. Seeing their source of sustenance threatened with extinction, they decided to act. The necessary contacts within government were made and, within a short while, a meeting was arranged between the chosen representatives of the Nosferatu and certain political and military leadersa meeting that took place in a conference room deep in the bowels of the Pentagon.

The Nosferatu were wisethey chose members of their clan who were least likely to frighten and disgust the humans by their appearance and demeanor. Even so, these were not creatures who conformed to the notion of the romantic vampire. With canine teeth glinting wickedly in the subdued lighting of the meeting room, fingers suggestive of flesh-rending claws, and eyes giving forth

a ghostly phosphorescence, they invoked an exquisite sense of unease among the human participants of the meeting.

The offer made by the Nosferatu at that meeting was short and sweet: "We are immune to this Cthulhu's telepathic attack, owing to our vampiric nature," they said. "Equip us with weapons, train us in their use, and give us the means to mount an attack upon Cthulhu. We'll do our utmost to pull mankind's fat out of the fire. After all, it appears you need us, and given the situation, we certainly need you...for your blood."

That last comment was wicked and cynical, but the Nosferatu knew they had the upper hand. The human participants knew who had the upper hand too, and quickly acquiesced. It was agreed that a select number of vampire-commandos would be trained and equipped to carry the battle to Cthulhu in his lair of R'lyeh. The meeting concluded with a consensus of agreement that something meaningful had been achievedmankind now had some small hope of fighting back and perhaps, yes, even surviving. In spite of this, two high-ranking military officers who had attended the meeting went directly to a men's lavatory and blew their brains out with their service pistolsthey had apparently seen and heard more than they could stomach at the meeting and took the quick but messy way out.

Activity began immediately after the fateful meeting. The Nosferatu set about recruiting the toughest and most ferocious of their numberafter all, they needed

fighters now, not diplomats. The vampires who were recruited for this assignment were the epitome of the stereotypical predatory vampiretheir canine teeth were sharp and elongated almost to the point of grotesquerie; their fingers were not merely flesh-rending, but suggested the power to eviscerate at a single swipe, while their eyes gave forth a red demonic glow as if there were a fire deep within their brains. They were monsters, in shortbut monsters were needed now.

One thousand vampire-commandos were to be trained for this mission of destroying Cthulhu training which soon commenced. The vampire-commandos proved to be apt pupils in learning how to use the rocket launchers, heavy machine-guns and flame-throwers they would be armed with. They showed equal facility in the art of lobbing the phosphorus grenades they would be carrying, and were nothing short of brilliant in the use of close-in weapons like the trench-knife, though they set far greater store in their ability to slash any amount of tissue to ribbons with their finger-claws. They made passable students in learning how to operate the specially outfitted submarines that would carry them to the target destination of R'lyeh, but this skill was required for only that small number of vampire-commandos who would be actively engaged in piloting the craft.

The training was not without its contretemps, however. Three military instructors committed suicide, seven had nervous breakdowns, and five went

irreversibly insane. In addition, being at close quarters with so many blood-rich humans as they were, the vampire-commandos succumbed to a blood-frenzy on one occasion and three military instructors were attacked and sucked dry of all their blood. This was a small price to pay, as one military officer observed, for the chance of allowing mankind to survive.

With their training completed and the special submarines prepared for the mission awaiting them, the one thousand vampire-commandos were transported to a secluded location on the West Coast of the United States, and soon the black hulls of the undersea vessels were gliding quietly away from land, going deep, deep into the depths of the Pacific.

Onward the avenging submarines drove, dark and silent, into the deep, wide sea. Guided by the sophisticated instruments that had a fix upon the location of R'lyeh, the vampire-commandos who piloted the vessels had supreme confidence that they could bring their vessels close enough to R'lyeh to discharge their cargo of vampiric ferocity into the structure that was Cthulhu's dwelling-place. Considerable planning had gone into this scheme, with the submarines being furnished with devices that could drive home a debarkation-tube through which the vampire-commandos could clamber in order to gain entry to Cthulhu's lair.

It must be understood that the vampire-commandos were virtually impervious to physical injury; possessed of superhuman strength, indifferent to

extremes of temperature and pressure, and not even requiring air to breathe, they were ideally suited for the assault that they hoped soon to launch. Some military planners had proposed that, once having precisely located R'lyeh, the submarines should launch nuclear-armed torpedoes at R'lyeh from a distance. The vampire-commando leadership vociferously rejected this notion, arguing that, if it failed, Cthulhu might be sealed away alive inside a monumental pile of rubble and slag which might render direct physical assault difficult, if not impossible and the vampire-commandos definitely looked forward to a direct assault.

They were really up for this mission and had even developed a certain esprit de corps amongst themselves; they were eager to close with this Cthulhu and butcher him close-up. It was certainly not a desire to avenge mankind that prompted this feeling, but derived rather from the innate bloodthirstiness and ferocity of the vampire mentality. The vampire-commandos were ready and confident by their very nature, they could not feel anxiety or apprehension about the upcoming battle. For them, it was just a matter of time.

Cthulhu knew that something was afoot. Deep inside R'lyeh, in a chamber so vast it defied description, he shifted his monumental bulk slightly perhaps expressing some vague feeling of disquiet. His most loyal and ferocious undersea minions, the giant squid, had informed him telepathically that things large, dark and foreign to the sea were fast approaching. Cthulhu immediately

recognized them for what they were and sent forth a telepathic probe of lethal intensity.

What he sensed from this tentative probing was puzzling to himthere was no suggestion of human mentation or emotion, yet there was something there that suggested a vitality of an almost animalistic nature, similar to what he was accustomed to when telepathically linked to his chief undersea servants, the giant squid. This experience increased the sense of disquiet that he felt, but Cthulhu had little time to reflect on this discovery, for the objects in question, ten submarines filled and pulsating with vampiric fury, had made a close approach to the outside walls of the huge edifice known as R'lyeh. Once having come within this striking distance, these specially equipped vessels proceeded to extend tubular structures of a unique design and appearance which began to furiously bore into the substance of R'lyeh's exterior.

Within the submarines, the vampire-commandos had worked themselves up to a frenzied, almost berserker-like condition. Yet there was a grim sense of purpose and control to them as wellthey had been trained to operate in teams when conducting the attack and knew that this Cthulhu was a monster of gargantuan size and power who was not to be underestimated.

Nevertheless, when the boring devices had broken through the thick, but not impenetrable walls of R'lyeh, and the telescoping debarkation tubes had been extended forward and through the breaches produced, a great shout of animal

fury arose from the vampire-commandos. The moment had arrived and they were ready and eager to begin their attack. Armed to the teeth with all manner of portable weaponry and survival gear, the vampire-commandos streamed down the shafts of the debarkation tubes to the point at which the tubes opened out into the interior of R'lyeh.

Make no mistake, these were hardened and determined commandos who were on the attack, not an undisciplined mob; the attack groups paused when they reached the ends of the shafts and considered the situation. From the shaft openings, the attackers looked out upon a huge cavern, the walls of which glistened with a faint bluish luminescence. Being vampires, and therefore having no difficulty in seeing in darkness, they saw also that the surface of the cavern walls seemed to be roiled by constant, undulating movement.

What they did not know at that moment was that Cthulhu had exuded a remarkable glutinous substance which coated the entire interior of R'lyeh, providing a seal against the sea. This substance also had a limited sentience which proceeded to manifest itself by reacting to the presence of the vampire-commando invaders. It began to quickly ooze into and over the breaches produced by the invasive debarkation tubes.

The vampire-commandos reacted quickly, discharging their flame-throwers against the oozing substance; they discovered to their glee that the substance

burned and withered quickly under this assault. Continuing to burn furiously ahead of them with their flame-guns, the vampire-commandos advanced grimly forward, out of the debarkation tubes, across the surface of the cavern and into the connecting tunnels which they now realized led ultimately to their quarry.

Far below in the mother-cavern, Cthulhu reflected and considered. The invaders had breached his first physical defense, and he had long since discovered that they were completely immune to his telepathic powers. He directed his small army of roaming polymorphic Shoggoths to attack the invaders without delay. The Shoggoths moved to the attack, but the vampire-commandos were ready for this assault as well. The lumbering Shoggoths never really stood a chance—the vampire commandos cut into them with devastating streams of liquid fire, peppered them with tissue-charring phosphorus grenades, and raked them with explosive rounds of heavy machine-gun fire. As this pandemonium went on far above him, Cthulhu continued to reflect on what was developing and waited.

The vampire-commandos were carrying all before them; they felt an exhilaration and euphoria quite unlike anything else they had ever experienced—even the first taste of human blood after a long period of blood-fasting couldn't compare with this. They continued to move relentlessly forward, almost by instinct now, and finally arrived at the mother-cavern where great Cthulhu resided. Weapons at the ready, they streamed in by the

hundreds and soon a great multitude of them ranged across the cavern surface they stood and contemplated what they had finally brought to bay, this ferocious, battle-proven army of fanged and demon-eyed creatures of the dark.

Cthulhu rose before them; he towered and bulked mountain-like. Cthulhu was huge and powerful he was god-like. His gargantuan head held demon-eyes that glowed with the fury of stellar furnaces. His face was a swarm of long, constantly moving tentacles which lashed and flailed about with utter savagery. He possessed colossal bat-like wings which could launch him through the depths of interstellar space. His torso and limbs were almost beyond description spider-like, yet corded with a thick musculature that suggested something massively, oppressively machine-like. Above all, he was titanically monumental and, no other word served cosmic.

The vampire-commandos gave forth a great moan and fell almost as one to their knees. This was true evil, this was utter diabolism, this was supreme monstrousness. Cthulhu's evil was macrocosmic and contained the vast sweep of dark universes; their evil was puny, inconsequential and microcosmic in comparison. They had found their true god, the embodiment of pure evil, cosmic evil, the ultimate evil. Now it would be mankind's turn and, perhaps someday, the universe's. Cthulhu and these splendid vampire-commandos joined together, what could they not achieve? Death and destruction!

